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Parental Involvement Within Common Core

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Parental Involvement within Common Core

Catherine “Catie” Hoyt

California State University, Monterey Bay

May 2016

Abstract

This project examined how crucial parental involvement is to a child's academic achievement and the importance and positive impact that the Common Core State Standards cover in school. The researcher worked with a seventh and eighth grade English Language Arts teacher. The teacher worked on implementing the Common Core State Standards in the classroom, and was able to help find the best way to reach the parent community. The project entailed quarterly newsletters, as well as a parent pamphlet that provided information on how parents can become more involved in their child's academics and what the Common Core State Standards are. The parent pamphlets will be given to the school's main office and the teacher will send home the newsletters beginning at the start of the new school year. The project will encourage parents to become more involved and think positively of the new Common Core State Standards.

Literature Review

There is a positive correlation between parent involvement and a child's success; the more involvement from the parents has shown that it has helped improve the child's achievement levels which has allowed the children to perform better in school (Chavkin, N.F. 1993, Musty, K.N. 2015, Cotton, K., and Weiklund, K.R. 1989, Roberts, R.A. 2015, Lee, J.S., and Bowen, N.K. 2006, Shumow, L. and Miller, J.D. 2001, and Kessler-Sklar, S.L., and Baker, A.J. 2000). There are a vast amount of different types of parent involvement which correlated to the diverse types of parent demographics (Lee, J.S., and Bowen, N.K. 2006).

With the new academic standard of teaching referred to as Common Core, teachers are having to change their ways of teaching. Teachers are expected to implement new standards in a more advanced way of teaching. Teachers are the communication tie between what is expected of the students to learn and the students learning it (Cogan, L., W. Schmidt, and R. T. Houang 2013).

This new style of teaching has upset some parents, because it was not the way they learned in school. Studies have shown that parents want to be informed about these new changes with their child's learning (Musty, K.N. 2015, Izzo, C.V., Weissberg, R.P., Kasprow, W.J., and Fendrich, M. 1999, and Kessler-Sklar, S.L., and Baker, A.J. 2000).

Teachers have trouble finding ways to involve the disadvantaged parents. Reasons for the parents being at a disadvantage include a language barrier, when teachers may not be able to speak the same language as all the parents, and also parental educational levels (Shumow, L. and Miller, J.D. 2001, Chavkin, N.F. 1993, and Holmes, C.N. 2014).

Parents do have their concerns about the Common Core that makes them hesitant to learn about it. Since they did not learn the same way as their children are learning, it has come as a shock to them. With this shock comes negativity and some reluctance to having their kids learn something new. When students are coming home and asking for help from their parents with homework and the parents have a difficult time giving advice which makes both the children and parents feel frustrated (Musty, K.N. 2015).

However, the rise of technology has become an advantageous tool for parents, even the low-income parents. Parents of all backgrounds have an easier access to resources to help their children, because of the new advances in technology. With more knowledge for the parents it can help bridge the gap between the home and school. This knowledge can include more communication from the teachers to the parents about programs. Also the more that teachers communicate with parents about their child's progress in school is very beneficial ((Shumow, L. and Miller, J.D. 2001, Lee, J.S., and Bowen, N.K. 2006, and Roberts, R.A. 2015). Increasing the knowledge for parents about the Common Core has had a positive educational impact in their child's performance.

Teachers can help parents by providing access to resources and providing ways in which the parents can help their kids at home. If the teachers become more willing to practice helping involve the parents, then the parents will soon become more willing to participate more and help their child improve in their academics (Chavkin, N.F. 1993). Teachers that can help the parents not only help just those parents and children, but they allow for a door of communication within the community to open up and it allows for the parents, teachers, and students to be a part of something more meaningful (Holmes, C.N. 2014).

There are ways to increase the amount of parent involvement. One such way is to create programs at the school to encourage and support parental involvement policies. Another way is to have an open communication between the policy changes and success of the students with their parents from the teachers (Kessler-Sklar, S.L., and Baker, A.J. 2000). Parent involvement is essential to a student's academic achievement. The more highly involved and aware that the parents are the more success the students are bound to have. The more positive the parents respond to the Common Core the more likely the students will reciprocate those actions and be more open to learning about it. Common Core is the new way of learning and both students and parents will have to be accepting of the new changes (Musty, K.N. 2015, Roberts, R.A. 2015, and Cogan, L., W. Schmidt, and R. T. Houang 2013).

The problem is that the lack of parent involvement due to the new educational policy changes is taking a toll on the student's' academic achievements. The Common Core is an educational policy that is starting to be implemented more and more in classrooms. Since this is a new idea, most parents have not seen this style of academics and it has discouraged them to be more actively involved. They are unaware of resources available to them as well as they feel they are being discouraged, because they do not understand the new way of learning. The more that a parent is aware and involved in their student's' life the more positively that the students will respond and do better in school.

Project Description

Parent involvement is critical to a child's academic achievement in school. With the Common Core slowly starting to become more prevalent in California public schools, some parents may feel out-of-the-loop. Parents may not be familiar with the teaching style of the new Common Core, and so may experience frustration with an inability to help their children. This project will provide multiple resources for parents so they can maintain involvement in their children's academic lives.

As part of the project to help inform parents about the Common Core and the impact of parental involvement, a series of four quarterly newsletters will be sent home over the course of the year. The first newsletter will be sent home during the first week of school in August and will describe the basic aspects of the Common Core (See Appendix B). This newsletter will also describe the benefits of Common Core in the classroom, as well as include websites and other resources available for parents to learn more about the topic. This will be a crucial learning point for the parents, since a majority are still unaware of what the Common Core is and how it can be beneficial to their children's learning.

The second newsletter will be sent home at the start of the second quarter, in first week of October and will explain the importance of parental involvement. Parental involvement is crucial to a child's learning achievement. The newsletter will also include information on how parents can get more involved and suggest methods of maintaining a consistent and open communication with their child's teacher. This newsletter will also include helpful websites and resources in ways that the parents can become involved or how to communicate with their child's teacher.

The third newsletter will be sent home during the beginning of the third quarter in early January and will be a more persuasive document meant to encourage parental involvement. This newsletter will also include websites and other resources where parents can view examples of worksheets utilizing the Common Core that their children may be learning. The examples will portray methods of teaching which the teacher may be using and will include an example of a math worksheet as well as an English Language Arts worksheet. Parents can use these examples to better understand what their children are learning and how they are learning with the new Common Core standards.

The fourth and final newsletter will be issued at the beginning of the fourth quarter during the first few weeks of April, and will be a comprehensive review of the information provided in the previous three newsletters. The newsletter will reinforce the importance of Common Core, ways in which parents can become involved in their children's academics, and the importance of parental involvement. This newsletter will also encourage the growth of parents' knowledge in hopes that with greater understanding and a push for more resources, more parents will become more involved in their children's academics.

Another resource that this project entails is the creation of a trifold pamphlet to be made available for parents in the main office of the school (See Appendix C). This pamphlet will include information on what the Common Core is, how parents can become more involved, the effectiveness of parental involvement, and resources that the parents can use to become more aware of what their kids are learning. The resources will include websites and links to videos on topics being covered in the classroom. This pamphlet will provide resources for the parents that they may not have received before. The pamphlet can also be a useful tool if the child is

struggling,so the parents can use the resources provided to find ways to help that will complement methods teachers are using in the classroom.

This project provides two different resources intended to reach a majority of parents. Some parents will not read the newsletters but may pick up a pamphlet when they are in the office picking up or dropping off their child. Having these resources available in multiple formats in multiple locations will increase the likelihood that parents will utilize the resources provided to them so they can, in turn, become resources for their children.

This project would not have been thought out as well if not for the help of my community partner, Jeanne Bartels. Ms. Bartels is a 7th and 8th grade Language Arts teacher at Los Arboles Middle School. Ms. Bartels has been a teacher at Los Arboles for the past 20 years. She is dedicated and passionate about teaching and helping her students flourish. Ms. Bartels also works with the parents of her students, keeping open lines of communication so the parents have the greatest opportunity to be involved in their children's learning process.

For this project Ms. Bartels has served as a valuable resource in finding the best practical ways of imparting information to parents. Since Ms. Bartels has had a vast amount of experience working with many different types of parents, she has an understanding of which applications were useful and which were not. This project will help not only the parents, but Ms. Bartels as well, by giving her more techniques for reaching out to parents and what to keep in mind when trying to stay in contact with them throughout the year.

Results

The project will commence at the beginning of the 2016-2017 school year, in August. Parents will gain a clearer understanding of what the Common Core State Standards are and what has changed in the curriculum. The goal will be for parents to use this new understanding of the Common Core to become more involved in their child's education and ensure the child's academic achievement.

The best way to evaluate the success of this s project will be to involve the teachers, asking them to provide feedback on any changes in parental involvement levels after the new resources became available to them. Teachers will be interviewed to compare parental involvement from previous years to the level of involvement observed after the resources were distributed.

An improvement needed for the project would be to involve the teachers as much as possible. By sending home weekly or even monthly agendas on what the students are learning teachers can keep the parents involved and the parents can help their child and learn from them as well. Another improvement that would contribute to the success of this project would be to have a section during Back to School Night explaining in depth what the Common Core State Standards are, how effectively they are accomplishing their intended purpose, and how parent involvement will help the students advance academically. It may also be helpful to include a Spanish version of the pamphlet and the quarterly newsletters. Additionally, sending home an electronic version of the newsletter via email would ensure that teachers are reaching the parents that do not receive the newsletters from the students. Providing more links on the homepage of the school site website could be beneficial for the parents who are vigilant at checking for updates.

As I started my research I thought that it would be simple to schedule times to meet with staff members and school officials at the school, but once I began reaching out to these people I realized that it was difficult to schedule a reasonable time with these officials. Scheduling time to talk with the principals and school administration proved to be a difficult task, because of their extremely busy and structured schedules. Even successfully scheduling interviews with the teachers was challenging, because they were always so busy. My community partner would talk with me between class periods and on her prep period when she was not entering grades, answering emails, or running around the school. I would help her grade papers and make copies for her so that I was able to free up her schedule, giving her time to sit and talk with me about my project.

Interacting with my community partner, Ms. Bartels, I learned a lot about teaching that cannot be learned until one becomes a teacher. She told me stories of parents and the countless efforts she would make to reach out to them and in the end she would still receive negative feedback from the parents. She gave me many techniques on how to reach out to parents if one approach does not work. I learned that some parents will be very difficult to reach, but continually making an effort is worth it for the sake of the student.

The most enjoyable part of the project was being able to work with my community partner, Ms. Bartels. She is an amazing teacher and I learned a lot by getting to interact with her and her students. She was always willing to help me out as much as she could and give me helpful “teacher advice.” I enjoyed observing and learning from her teaching techniques. Her students thrive in her class, she has the respect of the students and she in turn respects each and every one of her students and staff members.

The most challenging part of the project was trying to reach out to school officials and get their feedback on my project. They were not responsive to my attempts to ask their advice on the best ways to reach out to the parents. It was frustrating, but I understand that they have very busy and structured schedules.

With this project I learned a lot about parents and the invaluable role they play in a child's academic achievements. I realized that it is crucial as an educator to involve the parents in the child's education. I would have gained a lot if there was a class at CSUMB dedicated to talking about parents and how to involve them, especially since they are an important player in a teacher's career. I enjoyed the researching and creation of this project. I learned from both the enjoyable and challenging aspects that I faced. I realized that it is just a part of life and to make anything successful I must be able to push through the challenges and the results will be that much more rewarding.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Interview

Catie Hoyt-Capstone Student (*Interviewer*), Dr. Joanne Lieberman-Associate Professor in Mathematics and Statistics (*Interviewee*), February 15, 2016 in Professor Lieberman's Office, Chapman Science Academic Center Room S209, Approximately 11am.

(Start of Interview)

Catie: Around Common Core are there any issues that you know of happening in math at the middle school level?

Professor Lieberman: When you say issues?

Catie: Problems that are coming up for teachers?

Professor Lieberman: Mostly what I see is them not having enough professional development to really know how to incorporate the mathematical practices from the Common Core. So even if they are using a curriculum that is supposedly aligned, in some cases that just means the content is covering those particular content standards for the grade. Bu the teachers aren't necessarily teaching in a different way and in a way perhaps not having the kids do much problem solving or discussing their reasoning. Things like that. Of course this is not across the board, but I have just seen this in places.

Catie: What would you say is the most difficult part of Common Core?

Professor Lieberman: Again, I can think about it as big picture systemic and then I do think that it's not enough time and money have been put into a front having teachers really understand what the Common Core is and how to teach that way, that they themselves did not learn using things like mathematical practices or not necessarily the conceptual knowledge of math that is now being asked for. So I'd say kind of big picture that's a big problem especially in California, some states are probably similar to California, but others I think planned more in advance and did a little bit more in advance for preparing for implementation. In the classroom level I guess it'd be the same thing, but I don't think I could say a specific mathematical practice or specific content, but its again not having the teachers well enough prepared to know the conceptual depth of the math or how to teach in a way that brings out those mathematical practices.

Catie: What do you think teachers are struggling with the most? Not having enough preparation to teach it?

Professor Lieberman: Yes, I think in a general way that is it. I think like some are really excited by the Common Core and they feel like this is a better way, the content is good and having the kids understand the concepts is a great thing and having kids talk about math and justifying their thinking is all a good thing. I do see that about some of the teachers really feeling that way. But

then again believing that even though they themselves had not experienced it or have had a lot of professional development in it, it's still hard for them to enact.

Catie: Do you think there's enough resources out there for the teachers?

Professor Lieberman: I don't know. I don't know if it's that the districts in some cases haven't really found the right resources or like you say there aren't enough out there. I know when it was first, in California when districts were first asked to start implementing the Common Core, I think then that there weren't enough resources even financially for the districts to have professional development. Since then I haven't paid that much attention to it, but I think that the state has given the districts more money to be able to do that, but I don't know if they have been able to connect to the right resources that do help. It might be partly, because if for instance a district wanted to hire math coaches to help teachers implement Common Core, that would be an example of a resource. There's the financial resource to do that, but there's also the finding those coaches who are well enough qualified to do it and I think that could be an issue that there may not be enough of those people.

Catie: What do you think students struggle with, with Common Core?

Professor Lieberman: I think that especially as they get older and they have been experiencing math in a different way until now, it's hard for them not to be pushed to do more thinking on their own or with other people, but still be able to do more thinking, not just follow what the

teacher does and do. So I think both being asked to do more thinking of their own in math class and explaining their thinking. I think that all of that is hard for them, especially the older they are because they've experienced school math in such a different way and I feel like the younger kids like kindergarten, first grade I don't think have much problem with Common Core. For them it's like oh this is what doing math is. So it's very different.

Catie: Do you think parents struggle with being involved in their student's homework?

Professor Lieberman: Oh yea! Because again they didn't learn math this way and so I definitely hear that from parents. And I feel like that's another thing and again it probably varies a lot state to state and district to district about how much education the parents are getting about the Common Core. I think they get a lot of misinformation so they don't really know that much about what it really is, but then they see their child's homework and it's being asked in a way that they didn't learn how to do it. And instead of them saying oh how interesting and now they're learning conceptually and this is really great, they're like I don't know how to do this, I didn't have to do this and so they get upset about it and probably frustrated that they can't help, because they don't know it themselves. Some districts have done a lot of parent-education nights and not just about what is Common Core, but more ongoing actually having math nights where the parents are experiencing some of the math in the same way like in the Common Core.

Catie: Do you know if that was successful?

Professor Lieberman: I think from what I have read places that have done it have found it was helpful. Depends on the community and how many of the parents are going to go to those, but I do know in some places where they've had a parent education night about the Common Core not necessarily about the math but more about the knowledge of Common Core, many parents who complain about it don't even go to the parent-education nights about it. I do know in some communities parents do go to these ongoing parent-math nights and have found it to be helpful.

Catie: Do you know of any resources for the parents for Common Core, if there's any out there?

Professor Lieberman: I think there are, probably online. The state may have something intended for parents and maybe the curriculum has something for the parents also intended for them. And again some districts have the ongoing parent nights.

Catie: Do you think parents would utilize the parent's night education on how to help their kids with Common Core?

Professor Lieberman: In some cases, they would. The generic booklets do exist, but might be too generic. What I see from parents is that it's more content specific of when the kids are supposed to be doing, like in 4th grade mathematics where the kids learn to do an array to do two-digit multiplication. It is very conceptual and really helps the kids learn what they are doing with the distributive property and the parents don't really know how to do that and if the parents had

something that's specific on how to explain it, that's more helpful than the generic booklet that tells them that these are the specific questions you can ask your child.

(End of Interview)

Appendix B



Quarter 1

What is the Importance of Parental Involvement?

In a synthesis of research from 2002, *nea.org* found that, regardless of family income or background, students with involved parents are more likely to:

- Earn higher grades and test scores, and enroll in higher-level programs
- Be promoted, pass their classes, and earn credits
- Attend school regularly
- Have better social skills, show improved behavior, and adapt well to school
- Graduate and go on to postsecondary education



There is a positive correlation between parent involvement and a child's success; involvement from parents has been shown to improve the child's

achievement levels which then allows the child to perform better in school.

How Can Parents get Involved?

One way to increase parental involvement is to create programs at the school to encourage and support understanding. Another way is to have an open communication about the Common Core State Standards with the child's teacher. Parent involvement is essential to a student's academic

achievement. The more highly involved and aware the parents are, the more success the students are bound to have.



achievement. The more highly involved and aware the parents are, the more success the students are bound to have.

Resources:

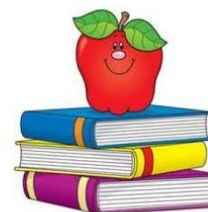
Further information can be found in the articles: School District Parent Involvement Policies and Programs by Susan Kessler-Sklar, Parent Involvement in Education by Kathleen Cotton, and

Parents' At-Home and At-School Academic Involvement with Young Adolescents by Lee Shumow. The official Common Core website also has a list of resources for parents. corestandards.org

Question Corner:

What are the two main subjects taught with the Common Core State Standards? (*Answer will be on next quarters newsletter in October*)

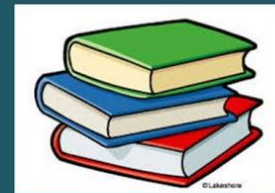
*Check out the Common Core website to learn more at corestandard.org.





Parent's Newsletter

October



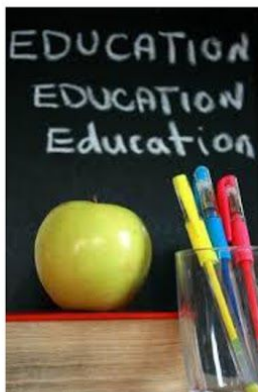
"Education is the key to success in life, and teachers make a lasting impact in the lives of their students." -Solomon Ortiz

Quarter 2

What is the Common Core?

Common Core is a set of State Standards that provides clear and consistent learning goals that will help prepare students for life. Common Core is implemented in Kindergarten through 12th grade in both English Language Arts and Math.

Common Core began being implemented in California in 2012 after approval by the State Board of Education.



To learn more about what Common Core is and the benefits of this new set of standards, visit the California Department of Education website. There is also a video found on YouTube called The Council of the Great City School.

The video is a 3-minute explanation of Common Core State Standards.

What are the Benefits of the Common Core?

The Common Core has a consistent set of standards that are in place to provide a method of learning that will help students excel in life.

The Common Core State Standards are:

1. Research- and evidence-based.
2. Clear, understandable, and consistent.
3. Aligned with college and career expectations.
4. Based on rigorous content and application of knowledge through higher-order thinking skills.
5. Built upon the strengths and lessons of current state standards.
6. Informed by other top performing countries in order to prepare all students for success in our global economy and society.



Information taken from corestandards.org.

Question Corner:

Fact or Myth?

The Common Core State Standards tells teachers what to teach. (*Answer on next quarters newsletter*)



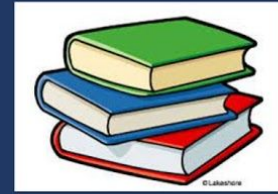
Answer from August's Newsletter:

The two subjects taught with the new Common Core State Standards are *English Language Arts* and *Mathematics*.



Parent's Newsletter

January



"The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education."

-Martin Luther King, Jr.

Quarter 3

Encouraging Parent Involvement

Working with your student's will help them excel. It can be frustrating if you are not well aware of the new style of teaching that goes along with the Common Core. The website superteacherworksheets.com provides a variety of examples from both Mathematics and English Language Arts. Not only can this website provide background knowledge for parents to help their children, but if the student is struggling in a certain area there are worksheets to provide an additional resource for them to learn.



How to Help your Children?

The Scholastic's website provides suggestions to help promote the importance of the Common Core. commoncore.scholastics.com.

This website also includes a list of Questions & Answers that professional staff have answered. It can be helpful if the question is similar to one that parents might have.

Essential Question: ELACC4RL2:

How do I determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text?



Benefits of the Common Core

1. Internationally benchmarked.
2. Student expectations are clear to parents, teachers, and the general public.
3. Allows for collaboration with other states on best practices, instructional materials, and professional development.
4. Reduces cost to the state by sharing collective learning and knowledge.

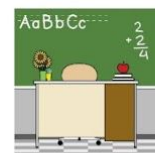
12. Which is a related subtraction sentence?



- A. $2 + 4 = 6$
B. $5 + 2 = 7$
C. $4 + 3 = 7$
D. $3 + 5 = 8$

Question Corner:

Who can parents ask to get more information about the Common Core State Standards? (Answer on next quarters newsletter)



Answer from October's Newsletter:

Fact: Teachers know best about what works in the classroom. That is why these standards establish what students need to learn but do not dictate how teachers should teach. Instead, schools and teachers will decide how best to help students reach the standards.



Quarter 4

Think Positively

Common Core State Standards have a lot of benefits for the students including:

1. Putting creativity back in the classroom
2. Giving students a deeper understanding
3. Allowing for critical thinking
4. Collaboration
5. Advancing equity
6. Getting students ready for college



Common Core Changes

The changes made in *Mathematics* include:

1. Greater focus on fewer topics.
2. Linking topics and thinking across grades.
3. Pursue conceptual understanding, procedural skills and fluency, and application with equal intensity.

The changes made in *English Language Arts* include:

1. Building knowledge through content rich nonfiction.
2. Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from texts, both literary and informational.
3. Regular practice with complex texts and their academic language.

Additional Resources

The California Department of Education website cde.org provides information about the Common Core State Standards. This information is strictly California based and regularly updated.

Teachers are also a great resource for parents. They have an opportunity for many resources and they may be more personable than a website when looking for more information on the questions that may arise.



Question Corner:

What did you learn about Common Core State Standards?

Answer from January's newsletter:

Parents can seek out a student's teacher to find out more information on the Common Core State Standards.



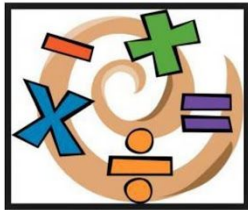
Appendix C

What is the Common Core?

Common Core is a set of State Standards that provide clear and consistent learning goals to help prepare students for life.



Common Core is for grade K-12 in subjects: *English Language Arts* and *Mathematics*.

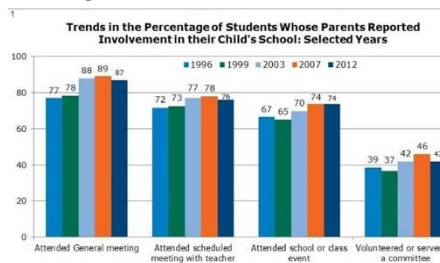


Common Core began implementation in 2012 with approval by the State Board of Education.



Effectiveness of Parent Involvement

Parent involvement is crucial to a child's learning.



Students with involved parents are more likely to:

- Earn higher grades and test scores, and enroll in higher-level programs
- Be promoted, pass their classes, and earn credits
- Attend school regularly
- Have better social skills, show improved behavior, and adapt well to school
- Graduate and go on to postsecondary education

Information found from nea.org

There is a positive correlation between parent involvement and a student's academic achievements.

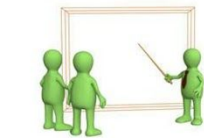
How can Parents be more Involved?

*Talk with the child

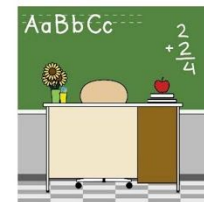
*Ask the child questions about their homework



*Have the child explain what they are learning.



*Communicate with the child's teacher.



List of Resources:

The official Common Core website has information on the implementation of the Common Core. corestandards.org

Scholastic's website provides suggestions on promoting the importance of the Common Core.



commoncore.scholastics.com

Examples of worksheets from both Mathematics and English Language Arts can be found on the Super Teacher Worksheets website.

The worksheets also give the Common Core Standard that correlates with it.



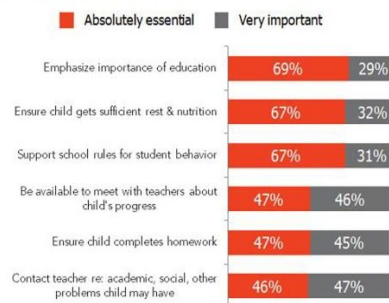
The California Department of Education website gives information about the Common Core State Standards.



"At the end of the day, the most overwhelming key to a child's success is the positive involvement of parents."

-Jane D. Hull

What teachers say parents can do to promote student learning and healthy development.



"The Common Core standards finally make real the promise of American public education to expect the best of all our school children."

-Michael Casserly, Executive Director, Council of the Great City Schools



Parent Resources for Common Core

